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C O N F I D E N T I A L MANILA 003299

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STATE FOR EAP/MTS
USPACOM ALSO FOR FPA HUSO
JOINT STAFF J5 (WILKES/ROBINSON/CLEMONS)
OSD/ISA/AP (LAWLESS/TOOLAN/BAILEY)

E.O. 12958: DECL: 08/04/2016

TAGS: PTER MOPS MCAP PREL RP

SUBJECT: INITIAL SUCCESS IN ONGOING OPERATIONS AGAINST
TERRORISTS

REF: MANILA 3218

Classified By: (U) Charge d'Affaires, a.i., Paul W. Jones
for reasons 1.4(b) and (d).

¶1. (C) SUMMARY. The Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) operation to capture or kill senior terrorist leaders on the island of Jolo, which began on August 1, has met with initial success. One mid-level terrorist has been killed and the senior leadership has been driven out of its safe havens. Jemaah Islamiyah bombers Dulmatin and Umar Patek may have fled into an area under the control of the Moro National Liberation Front (MNLF). AFP forces are surrounding this pocket and have begun negotiations with the MNLF for a joint effort to cordon and search the area. The Ambassador and now the Charge have been in close contact with GRP leaders, and U.S. forces are providing extensive support on the ground. The AFP appears determined and well coordinated, but the terrain is extremely difficult and the terrorists are skilled at evading capture. END SUMMARY.

INITIAL SUCCESS

¶2. (C) "Operation Ultimatum," the Armed Forces of the Philippines effort to capture or kill senior Jemaah Islamiyah (JI) and Abu Sayyaf Group (ASG) terrorists on the island of Jolo, is now in its fourth day. The operation has succeeded in its initial objective of driving Khadaffy Janjalani, Abu Solaiman, Dulmatin, Umar Patek, and other terrorist leaders from their safe havens in western Jolo, overrunning the terrorist camps in the morning hours of August 1. Ismin Sahiron, a mid-level ASG leader, appears to have been killed in a fire fight with Philippine Marines. Four other ASG operatives were intercepted by Philippine Naval Special Warfare Units on August 3 as they attempted to flee the island in a speedboat. They are now undergoing interrogation.

SHRINKING NET AROUND TERRORIST LEADERS

¶3. (C) Dulmatin and Umar Patek may have fled into a six-square kilometer area under Moro National Liberation Front (MNLF) control. Janjalani and Abu Solaiman may be in separate locations on Mount Tumatangas just outside this area. The AFP is reinforcing its troops on the ground, and slowly beginning to shrink the perimeter around the MNLF zone. SOUTHCOM Deputy Commander for Operations BG Dolorfino is in close contact with the senior MNLF leader on Jolo, Kajid Ajibon, to avoid clashes between the MNLF and AFP, and

to discuss possible joint action to apprehend the terrorists.

DISCOVERY OF IED COMPONENTS

14. (C) Initial site exploitation of the terrorist camps overrun by the AFP has revealed an extensive amount of components and explosives similar to those used in the bomb that killed five civilians and wounded 25 others in a Jolo City market earlier this year. The AFP plans a public display of the material as part of its anti-terrorism media campaign.

AMBASSADOR IN CLOSE CONTACT WITH GRP

15. (C) Ambassador has been in close contact with Secretary of Defense Cruz and National Security Advisor Gonzales throughout the operation. Gonzales told Ambassador August 3 that the GRP would ask imprisoned MNLF leader Nur Misuari to persuade his followers to seize the terrorists and turn them over to the AFP. Charge is now continuing these contacts.

JSOTF AND US NAVY PROVIDING SUPPORT

16. (C) Joint Special Operations Task Force-Philippines (JSOTF-P) was extensively involved in preparing the AFP for the operation, providing marksmanship, live fire and maneuver, and small unit leadership training, as well as planning assistance. JSOTF-P elements are currently advising and assisting AFP counterparts and providing intelligence fusion. At Philippine request under the just-signed Kapit Bisig framework, the US Navy's High Speed Vessel Joint

Venture transported an 80-man amphibious assault force from its staging area in Zamboanga to its launch point just off-shore northwest Jolo at the start of the operation. A US Navy P-3 aircraft based at the Philippine Air Force Base of Mactan, Cebu is providing intelligence and surveillance support. A US helicopter evacuated two AFP wounded and the remains of one casualty from Jolo to Zamboanga.

COMMENT

17. (C) While the initial signs are encouraging, it is important to manage expectations regarding this latest GRP effort against the JI and ASG. The steep jungle terrain favors individuals trying to hide or flee.

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Jones